

December 15, 2005
For Immediate Release

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U.S. and Honduras to Cooperate on Detecting Illicit Shipments of Nuclear Material

Will Help Thwart Terrorist Attempts to Smuggle Material for Nuclear Weapons and "Dirty Bombs"

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States and Honduras signed an agreement today to help thwart the smuggling and trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive material, which could be used by terrorists for nuclear weapons or "dirty bombs." The arrangement with Honduras will install detection equipment and train personnel to identify hidden and illicit shipments of nuclear and other radioactive material.

"Protecting the world's maritime shipping network from nuclear smuggling is a paramount objective, with cooperation being key to that mission. Along with the Honduran government, we will be able to further international nonproliferation efforts and better protect not only Honduran and U.S. citizens, but the rest of the international community," said NNSA Principal Deputy Administrator Jerry Paul.

This is the second international cooperative agreement involving both the Department of Homeland Security's Container Security Initiative and the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) Megaports Initiative. The first was signed with the Sultanate of Oman in November 2005. U.S. Ambassador Charles Ford and Customs and Border Protection Bureau Assistant Commissioner E. Keith Thomson signed today's agreement with Honduras.

Under the Container Security Initiative (CSI), multidisciplinary teams of U.S. officers from the Customs and Border Protection Bureau, and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement work with host government counterparts to establish security criteria for identifying high-risk containers. Their mission is to target and pre-screen containers destined for the United States. To expedite the inspection process, host country customs administrations are required to provide non-intrusive technology to quickly inspect any identified high-risk containers before they are shipped to U.S. ports. The capabilities provided under the Megaports Initiative offer an additional targeting tool for customs officials supporting CSI.

Through NNSA's Second Line of Defense Program, similar partnerships exist with the Netherlands, Greece and other nations. Representatives from Europe, Asia, South America, the Middle East and the Caribbean are currently in discussions with the United States to add monitoring systems in key port facilities worldwide to further international nonproliferation efforts and provide useful evidence to support prosecution efforts.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear energy. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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